Office of Congressman Charles W. Dent

Proudly Representing Pennsylvania's 15th District

For Immediate Release
January 11, 2007

Press Contact: Gregg W. Bortz
610-861-9734 or (cell) 202-222-5118

Rep. Dent helps pass stem-cell research bill that expands funding and sets strong ethical guidelines

WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. Rep. Charlie Dent today voted for HR 3, the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2007, which will expand the limited number of embryonic stem cell lines currently available for federally-funded research and set ethical guidelines for this research

"The promise of stem cell research – to find treatments for devastating diseases like Parkinson's, juvenile diabetes, coronary heart diseases, cancer, and spinal cord injuries – is too great not to explore every possibility," Congressman Dent said. "H.R. 3 will take another step in ensuring that researchers adhere to the highest possible principles of scientific inquiry and respect ethical boundaries while advancing some of the most critical research of our time."

It is the second time Congressman Dent has voted for this bill. In 2005, Congressman Dent voted for the House's Castle/DeGette bill, legislation that would lift the current restriction on federally-funded stem cell research and establish ethical requirements for stem cells that are eligible for federally funded research. The Senate passed the bill in 2006 but President Bush vetoed it; Congressman Dent voted to override the veto, but the effort fell short.

"I believe the President may be sincere in his opposition to this bill, but I believe he was poorly advised in vetoing it," Congressman Dent said. "I hope he reconsiders taking a similar action this year."

Congressman Dent made the following remarks Thursday on the House floor:

"I rise today to speak in support of HR 3, the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2007.

"Although the purpose of this legislation is straightforward, the significance cannot be understated. H.R. 3 would expand the limited number of embryonic stem cell lines currently available for federally-funded research. Permitting research on additional embryonic stem cell lines will advance a field that scientists agree holds the greatest potential to provide groundbreaking therapies for some of the most vexing diseases of our time.

"I believe that stem cell research, all forms of stem cell research – adult, cord blood, amniotic, embryonic – should be pursued. This is not a competition. The promise of stem cell research – to find treatments for devastating diseases like Parkinson's, juvenile diabetes, coronary heart diseases, cancer, and spinal cord injuries – is too great not to explore every possibility.

"That said, embryonic stem cell research raises serious ethical questions. I strongly believe that H.R. 3 is the most responsible way to ensure that we are observing the highest possible standards of ethical and clinical practice -- by setting meaningful ethical guidelines for embryonic stem cell research that will serve as the benchmark for scientific study throughout the world.

"H.R. 3 provides these ethical guidelines. First, in order to be considered for this research, the donated cells must come from in-vitro fertilization clinics, have been created for the purpose of fertility treatment, and be in excess of the clinical need of the individuals seeking treatment. Second, the in-vitro facility has to certify that these cells would be otherwise discarded if not donated and that the cells are not destined for implantation. Third, the donors of these cells have to sign a written consent form providing for such a donation and confirm that they have not received any inducements, financial or otherwise, to make the donation.

"We took one important step forward last Congress in addressing the ethical dilemmas that are raised by this emerging field of science when we enacted a law which prohibits the practice of "fetal farming," where human fetal tissue would be deliberately created for the purpose of scientific research.

"H.R. 3 will take another step in ensuring that researchers adhere to the highest possible principles of scientific inquiry and respect ethical boundaries while advancing some of the most critical research of our time."

###